

Sustainable Communities Combination Planning Grant  
City of Greenville, South Carolina  
Written Work Plan  
Appendix A

## LIVABILITY PRINCIPLES

Connections for Sustainability seeks to achieve the six Livability Principles, detailed below, in all aspects of the planning process.

1. **Provide more transportation choices** to decrease household transportation costs, reduce our dependence on oil, improve air quality and promote public health.
2. **Expand location- and energy-efficient housing choices** for people of all ages, incomes, races and ethnicities to increase mobility and lower the combined cost of housing and transportation.
3. **Improve economic competitiveness of neighborhoods** by giving people reliable access to employment centers, educational opportunities, services and other basic needs.
4. **Target federal funding toward existing communities** – through transit-oriented and land recycling – to revitalize communities, reduce public works costs, and safeguard rural landscapes.
5. **Align federal policies and funding** to remove barriers to collaboration, leverage funding and increase the effectiveness of programs to plan for future growth.
6. **Enhance the unique characteristics of all communities** by investing in healthy, safe and walkable neighborhoods, whether rural, urban or suburban.

### 1. Provide more transportation choices.

West Greenville's significant lack of sidewalk infrastructure and limited transit system prevent residents from accessing the Swamp Rabbit Trail- a downtown arterial greenway that connects to a larger trail network- as well as the A.J. Whittenburg Elementary School and the Kroc Center. Establishing safe connections to these amenities is crucial for Greenville's west side residents to provide walking or biking opportunities to destinations and for participation in educational and recreational activities. As part of the planning efforts, a community park will be established to create a direct and safe connection, via trails and sidewalks, from the adjacent neighborhoods to the Swamp Rabbit Trail, community amenities, and the downtown sector.

A significant planning component for the West Greenville/Reedy River Corridor is a bus rapid transit (BRT) route that will stretch from the Kroc Center to Clemson University's International Center for Automotive Research (CU-ICAR), an advanced-technology research campus located in the City's emerging technology sector. This sector will provide office, administrative and laboratory space for new and existing companies and is expected to offer over 10,000 innovation-focused jobs once operating at full capacity. Evaluating transit connections to Greenville's west side and addressing the gaps in transit service is critical for reliable, efficient, and affordable transportation to the proposed technology jobs. A completed transit planning document, within the larger comprehensive plan, will act as a catalyst for transit connections from west Greenville to the emerging technology sector to downtown Greenville.

Connections for Sustainability will provide the strategic framework for amending the City's current building and zoning codes in order to make them supportive of transit-oriented development (TOD) and to facilitate the future development of a city-wide BRT system.

A comprehensive planning effort for the west Greenville area will reinforce the need for continued work on pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure and supplement the City and State of South Carolina's investment in bike lanes in the planning area.

## **2. Promote equitable, affordable housing.**

According to 2008 Estimates, approximately 21.8% of the housing units located 0.75 miles from the proposed park are vacant and 59% are rental units. Stabilizing a neighborhood with so many vacant and rental units can be difficult, yet it is necessary to revitalize the dilapidated and blighted areas of the community and to create an appropriate mix of rental and for sale housing choices within Greenville's west side. An affordable housing strategy will be developed and incorporated into the overall comprehensive planning efforts to sustain the City's goals to increase the number of affordable housing units for low-to-moderate-income residents.

A plan for building a TOD site in west Greenville will be created as one component of the Connections for Sustainability Plan. Once established, a TOD site will promote an appropriate mix of residential opportunities that can support a variety of incomes, including low-to-moderate. The TOD will expand housing options in the area through additional opportunities for affordable and market-rate housing.

## **3. Enhance economic competitiveness.**

It is readily apparent, with a median income of less than \$19,000 and an unemployment rate of 22.6%, that the residents of Greenville's west side have an express need for enhanced access to employment both within and outside the community. As mentioned previously, this planning effort will explore ways to strengthen existing transit connections or create new ones to ensure that west Greenville residents have reliable access to the over 10,000 lucrative jobs slated for the technology sector.

Utilizing \$600,000 in funds from the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Brownfields program, the City will conduct over 20 Phase I and Phase II Environmental Site Assessments (ESA) in the west side. By undertaking this task, the City will expose all environmental uncertainties regarding these sites and will create a detailed plan to clean-up these sites in order to encourage development ventures. Investment in brownfields will promote economic development by encouraging businesses to recycle parcels of land, relocate in the area, and create new jobs.

To reinforce access to jobs for the low-income residents of the west side, the City will continue its work with existing workforce development programs. The job preparation training provided by these programs can help prepare residents for jobs in the emerging technology sector as well as for jobs created in the immediate area.

## **4. Support existing communities.**

The City of Greenville has recognized two neighborhoods located in the planning area, Southernside and West Greenville, as Special Emphasis neighborhoods, meaning that the City has concentrated

community development efforts to promote revitalization and provide economic opportunities. The Plan will concentrate federal funding in these existing communities where it can be used to elevate the redevelopment efforts already invested by the City, the Kroc Center and A.J. Whittenberg Elementary School.

Public participation is a key goal of this planning process, thus specific opportunities will be created to educate city residents on livability and actively engage them in the planning process. Two educational components, a Livability Studio and a Livability Curriculum, will be designed to deliver greater understanding of livability concepts to a wide range of citizens. The Livability Studio will feature a classroom and meeting space, as well as computers, to help people visualize, analyze, and communicate about important community planning decisions. The Livability Curriculum will allow children to explore how factors such as transportation and housing impact a neighborhood's livability. In order for a livable community to truly take hold in west Greenville, the desire and leadership must come from the people residing there. Inclusion of these educational components will empower citizens of all ages to undertake a larger role in shaping the future of their neighborhoods with a green and livable conscience.

The Salvation Army's Kroc Center and the A.J. Whittenberg Elementary School were strategically located on the west side to kick start revitalization in the area and to act as cornerstones of the community. Comprehensive planning for Greenville's west side will capitalize on these significant community investments by designing the Livability Curriculum for the A.J. Whittenberg School, and planning for multi-modal access to both facilities from the surrounding neighborhoods. The Livability Studio and the Livability Curriculum will ensure the momentum for enacting livable concepts is maintained through continuous exposure to the topic.

#### **5. Coordinate and leverage federal policies and investment.**

The City has worked extremely hard to align local, federal, and private funding for the west side area. To date, total local government funding committed to the area is \$695,000 with an additional \$970,069 in federal funding, and over \$60 million in redevelopment funds for the Kroc Center and A.J. Whittenberg Elementary School.

The City's current building and zoning codes restrict opportunities for the redevelopment of underused structures, causing spaces to sit vacant for years. To promote revitalization, it is critical that building and zoning codes are streamlined. A thorough review of the City's building and zoning code and suggested improvements for current codes to regulate what is necessary, but also support innovation, will allow for the reuse of vacant properties for potential TOD sites.

A team of individuals comprised of citizens and partner organizations will be dedicated to oversee policy and implementation in an effort to ensure that the plan's other focus areas: transportation, housing, parks and open space, and economic development, align with one another and work efficiently toward planning for a livable community in Greenville's West side.

#### **6. Value communities and neighborhoods.**

Connections for Sustainability will enhance the unique characteristics of the planning area such as the Kroc Center, the A.J. Whittenberg Elementary School, the Swamp Rabbit Trail, and the area's proximity

to the Reedy River and to downtown Greenville. Particularly, the Plan seeks to use these attributes as a springboard for the educational components and for creating a substantial increase in City park space.

As noted in Principle 1, an implementation plan for a community park located on the west side will be created to overcome the barriers currently preventing the park's realization. These barriers include: land assemblage, funding, relocation of vital assets, and environmental hazard assessment and mitigation. The implementation plan for the park will enhance the existing neighborhoods such as Southernside and West Greenville and illustrate connections to the City's extensive trail network.

Many west Greenville sports leagues have been consolidated and now hold practice on the other side of the City, thereby prohibiting west Greenville's youth from participation due to a lack of viable transportation options. The community park will resurrect the neighborhood sports leagues by integrating a variety of sport and recreational fields. Developing an implementation plan for the park will set the stage for increasing accessible opportunities for healthy outdoor activities and will also illustrate how to connect neighborhoods, particularly the Southernside and West Greenville neighborhoods, to the City's extensive trail network.

#### **Alignment with Region Wide Plans**

The Connections for Sustainability Plan is supported regionally in its endeavor to create a sustainable and livable community. Regional and countywide planning efforts are effectively demonstrating their commitment to establishing thriving, livable communities where residents are connected to home, work, play, and open space through greenways and efficient transit service. In 2009, the public expressed a desire for livability principles through more pedestrian-friendly environments, preservation of neighborhoods, adequate affordable housing, and redevelopment and infill development. With the Community Challenge/Tiger II Planning Grant, the City of Greenville can be one of the first communities in the area to comprehensively plan for a livable community and, as a result of undertaking such an exhaustive planning process, will have the ability to share best practices with other regional entities.